

Update on Flu Vaccine Situation

On October 5, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced that it had been informed by the Chiron Corporation that none of Chiron's flu vaccine, Fluvirin, would be available for the 2004-2005 flu season. Chiron produces approximately one-half of the 100 million doses of flu vaccine CDC had arranged for this season.

On December 22nd, CDC expanded the conditions for individuals considered a "high priority" risk for flu. The new guidelines add persons between ages 50 and 64, as well as those providing care to high priority patients, to the "high priority" list in areas of sufficient supply. Local Health Departments will decide on a case-by-case basis whether or not to make vaccine available to individuals who meet the new criteria.

The additional vaccine will be distributed by CDC with priority going to those areas of the country with the greatest shortage. Congressman Brown has worked with officials from FDA and the City of Cleveland to try and secure additional doses of vaccine from Canada, as well as to make the CDC aware of the level of need in Northeast Ohio.

Because of this shortage, CDC has issued the following recommendations with regards to the flu vaccine.

Priority Groups for Influenza Vaccination

- All children aged 6–23 months;
- Adults aged 65 years and older; aged 50-64 where sufficient supply exists
- Persons aged 2–64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions;
- All women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- Residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities;
- Children aged 6 months–18 years on chronic aspirin therapy;
- Health-care workers involved in direct patient care; and
- Out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children aged <6 months.

Flu Activity Update

As of the week of December 30th, CDC described flu activity for Ohio as Sporadic. This means there have been few cases of influenza reported.

As the flu season progresses, please check back to my website (www.house.gov/sherrodbrown) or call my office (800-234-6413) for updates. You may also wish to periodically check the CDC website (www.cdc.gov) and/or the Ohio Department of Health website (www.odh.state.oh.us).